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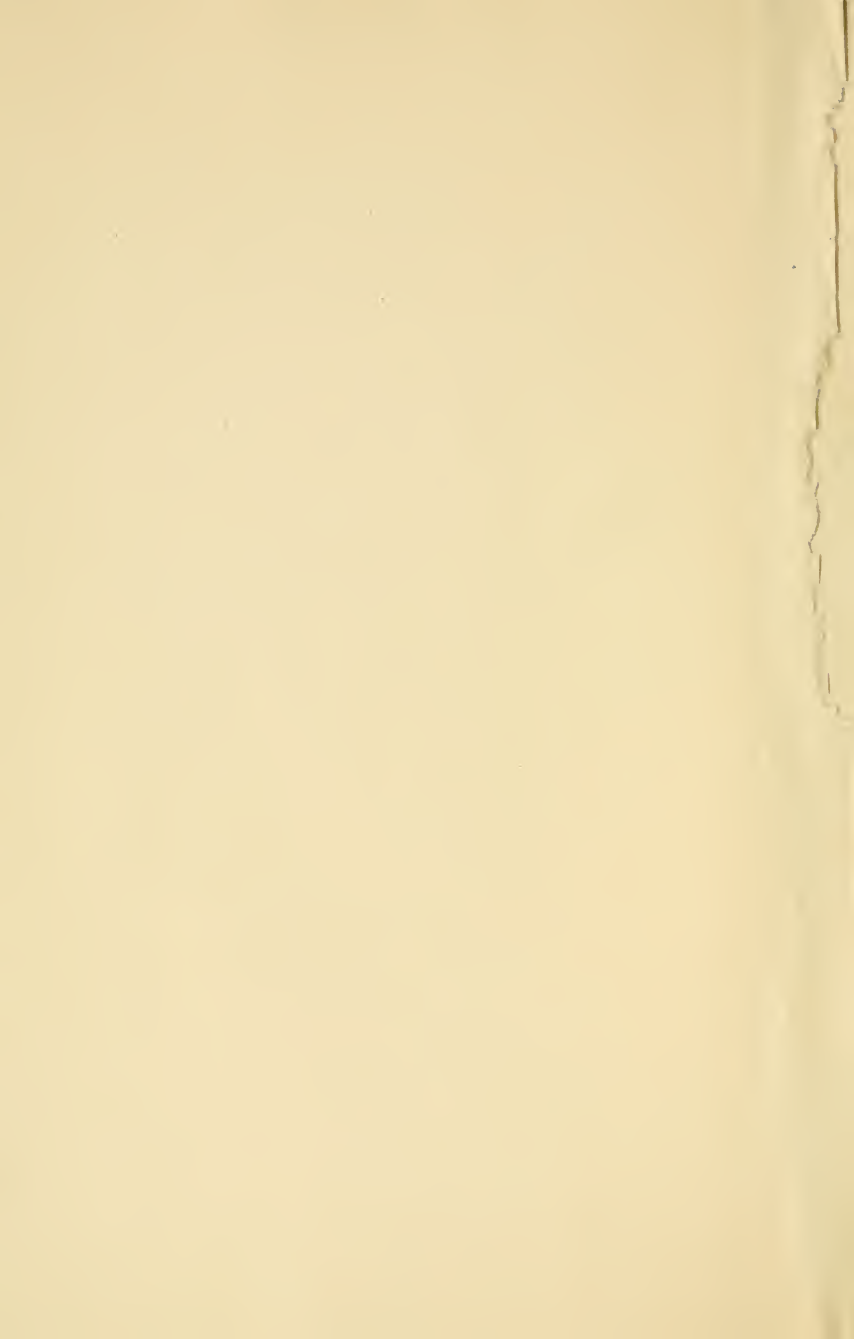
In an Old-Time Garden

and

Bits of Nature Verse



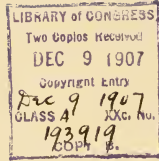




In an Old-Time Garden
and Bits of Nature Verse

ELIZA DANA WEIGLE

The Woodruff Print, Brandon, Vermont.



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In Memory
Eliza A. Dana

I know not whence, I know not where—
If from the blue, etherial air,
If from the sunset's fervid hue,
Or from the crystals of the dew,
From shadowed dropping of the night,
Or roseate flush of early light,
Or frosty falling of the leaves,
What time the quiet woodland grieves—
Comes thy still Presence to my days,
To lead in their apportioned ways ;
For each and every one of these,
The fragrance of thy memory breathes,
And fills my heart with thoughts of thee,
Till thought is as thy company—
That near-far land where thou dost dwell,
As a neighboring citadel.
O, sweet ! that all things beautiful in life,
With image of thyself, are rife :
That bloom and perfume of the flower
Recall but thee, in their bright hour ;
And every whisper of the breeze
Is borne from that Hesperides
Whence yet thou dost return, to live
Again in all that earth can give.

* * * * *

September 12th

Again returns the hallowed night,
On which thy spirit took its flight.
Again the soft September moon
Reflects the radiance of the noon,
And bathes the hoary mountain crest
On which thine eyes once loved to rest,
And all the quiet vale below.
With soft refulgence of its glow.
Again the cricket chirps : the note
Of whip-poor-will, that clear did float
Upon the air, and echo through the wood,
Once more doth grieve the solitude,
As if, with far lament, and deep,
It still would call thee out of sleep.
But thou art gone : the seasons trace
Their way above thy resting place
In tint of green, and flush of reddening leaves.
And snowy coverlid the winter weaves,
And, lo ! t'is now these many days
Since thou didst walk the old, familiar ways :
But still thou seemest as fond, as near,
As when we had thy presence here :
For now, where e'er I am, thou art,
Of life, and all life means, a part.

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In an Old-Time Garden

I enter, with reluctant tread,
This long deserted garden bed,
Where fragrant blooms of by-gone days
Turn towards me with reproachful gaze,
As if, with every quivering stem,
They sighed for hands that tended them.

My footsteps loiter at the gate, —
It stands ajar, as if to wait,
On creaking hinges, thick with rust,
For feet long since returned to dust.
My hands are slow to lift the latch,
Holding its mute, expectant watch.

But cinnamon-roses, with a streak
Of sunset on each crimson cheek,
And clove-pinks, sweet and spicy yet,
Although the weeds their borders fret,
Nod and beckon me to come,
With wistful salutation dumb.

And so I leave the world without,
Noisy of childhood's laugh and shout,
And pass within this quiet keep,
Kindred to the realms of sleep.

A speaking silence haunts the spot
Of marigold and touch-me-not,
Vibrant on the tender air
That bathes each nook and corner there—
A slumbering veil of misty haze,
Like gentle ghost, that, lingering, strays

About the fond, familiar place,
Its olden pathways still to trace :
The hum of homeward-faring bee,
And woodbird's plaintive minstrelsy,
The only sounds that greet my ear
Across the waiting atmosphere.

The rows of primly planted box,
That once kept back the straggling phlox,
The larkspur, and the red cockscomb,
From neighboring walks where they would roam,
No longer check their rude advance
With pride of well-kept circumstance :

But now, disheveled sentries stand,
Shorn of frown and reprimand :
The while the branches of the flowers,
Bold in their united powers,
Lean across their ragged crest,
Where thrush and starling weave their nest.

The gravel walks are choked with weeds,
Rank progeny of wind sown seeds,
And by the fountain's empty brink
Birds no longer poise to drink.
Thorn and briar bruise the grass
Where slippered feet were wont to pass.

But here are dahlias, golden-fringed,
And red, and russet tinged,
And four-o'clocks, and candy-tuft,
With saucy petals crimped and ruffed,
And by the wall, the holly-hock
Still flaunts its white and scarlet frock,

A gay, perennial cavalier,
Watching from the ramparts there.
The hands that planted thee are gone :
But thou, a flower, dost still bloom on.

And still, across the dial's face,
The shadows trail their laggard pace ;
And still the cypress and the yew
Wait the far door, as we pass through :
And moons shall rise, as then, as now,
And suns shall melt the winter's snow,

And stars shall gem night's canopy
For other eyes than ours, to see :
But still, within Love's garden set,
Shall bloom the rose and mignonette,
And Memory wreath her garlands there,
Forever bright, forever fair.

A Gossamer Lyric

The sun drives away
The clouds that would stay,
No meddlesome showers will wander this way,
For stretched on the green
Of glittering sheen,
The faries are bleaching their linen to-day.

Washed in the dew,
Snowy of hue,
Of gossamer texture the light can shine through,
They've spread it to dry
Where the breezes float by
At touch of the morning, delicious and new.

Fanning it over,
Fresh from the clover,
Where nestle the young of the lark and the plover,
Where foraging bee
Hastens to see
What new wealth of honey he there may discover,

They give it the scent
That the blossoms have lent
From intricate still where their perfumes are blent,
Till the damask is steeped
With the sweetness that leaped
In the veins of the flowers, so lavishly spent.

Attar of roses,
From run-a-way posies
That follow the wall where the butterfly dozes,
Breath of the lavender,
Humming-birds' provender —
While all the shy buds that the meadow discloses,

Their essence distil
At the wind's teasing will,
As light it comes rollicking over the hill,
A-racing and laughing,
At all the world chaffing,
With invisible footsteps that never are still.

Who spun the flax,
Whiter than wax,
And so fine it the eye of the weaver must tax ?
What delicate hands
Fashioned the strands,
With skill that all man's ingenuity lacks ?

Ah ! that I'll not say.
But come ! wander away
Where no truant raindrops will venture to stay :
For stretched on the grass
Where fairy-folk pass,
Fine linen cobwebs are bleaching to-day.

The Little Piper

When all a-down the garden,
And out across the wood,
The merry cricket strings his harp
To blythe and wanton mood,—

Plays up the song of gladness,
The tune the young heart knows—
The waving of the rushes,
The daffodil that blows,

The yellow of the cowslip,
The blue for-get-me-not,
The feathery St. John's-wort
That plumes each barren spot,

The waxing of the clover,
The buxom bouncing-Bet,
The sober little bonnet
Of Quaker mignonette,

The nodding of the cardinal,
The flash of dragon-fly,
The poppy's drowsy message
Where siren shadows lie,

The gossamer Queen Ann's lace,
The lowly meadow-rue,
And over all, the soft expanse
Of Heaven's softest blue,

You may know this little piper
Would give us holiday ;
For the Goddess of the Summer
Shall shortly pass this way.

* * * * *

When all a-down the garden,
And over field and wood,
The cricket plies his sober lute
To low and minor mood,

Plays out the song of changes,
The tune the old heart knows, —
The rustle of the grasses,
The thistle-down that blows,

The silver of the birches,
The gold of maple-leaf,
The tremble in the robin's throat,
That tells his time is brief,

The whispering of the wheat fields,
The sighing of the corn,
The frosty whistle of the quail
Across the silent morn,

The quiet stretches of the wood,
No sunlight sifting through,
And over all, the still expanse
Of Heaven's chilly blue,—

This little follower of Pan
Would lay his reeds away ;
For the Spirit of the Summer
Has shortly passed this way.

The Conqueror

Hail ! thou lusty trumpeter !
From the hills of dawn thy clarion note
Down the fortified mountain-side doth float,
And echo far through the frosty vale,
Girt with the balsam, green and hale.

Blow ! thou March King ! far and near !

Blow ! the numb pulse of the earth to stir.
Knight-errant, thou of the sweeping mane,
Loined, as the lion that stalks the plain,
With strength, to wrench from the frozen mold,
Through labor and travail, that it doth hold.

Blow ! thou Herald ! loud and clear !
The quivering heart of the sod doth hear,
And the sluggish veins of her Being throb,
As she stirs in her sleep, and harks to the sob
Of vanishing Winter, mighty and low,
As he wraps his garments about him to go.
He beats his breast with his icy flail,
His gaunt limbs stagger, his lips grow pale,
For borne on the wings of the battering breeze,
He hears the great voice of the Hercules,
March : and he sinks to his bier,

An impotent thing. The Monarch is here !

Blow ! thou iron-tongued trumpeter ! blow !

The quickening heart of the sod doth know.

Ride on the breast of the conquering gale,

Flinging thy needles of sleet and of hail.

Laugh at thy victory, young-born king !

Thou scourgest the Winter,

Thou bringest the Spring !

We Who Wake

A tuneful little minstrel
Sings out at close o'day—
As dewes do be a-falling,
He starts his roundelay :

And sober folk, a-hearkening
In the silence o'the night,
Do marvel how his piping
Doth draw the heart so tight.

And is it knell o'summer,
Ghost o'the springtime fled,
Doth pitch his merry music
To note o'grief instead ?

Oh ! Is it thought o'frost-blight,
Of grieving o'the rain,
Of set o'sun in windy sky,
So sorrows his refrain ?

We lean without, and listen,
In the watches o'the night,
And pray the plaintive piper
To make his tune more bright :

But yet, within the grasses,
When sounds do all be still,
He strings again his sobbing lute,
And harks o'coming ill.

O ! strident little minstrel !
And cans't thou not forbear ?
'Tis weary, thinking on the past—
Life's buried hopes be there.

But still, with sound o'greeting,
When Autumn's night draws near,
The sable cricket chirps again—
And we who wake, do hear.

A Little Prophet of the Sky

Arachne spins !

It will not rain today.

With cunning knowledge of the wind and sky,
Gained of her ancient ancestry,
She gives no heed to clouds that lower,
With threatenings of summer shower,

Across the morning gray :

But plies her shuttle in and out,
With skill the weaver knows about,
And spikes the tissues of her tent,

Filmy and transparent,

With pointed spear tips of the grass—
Fair weather sign to all who pass.

Arachne spins !

The clouds seek other lands.

The dusty weeds that harbor by the road,
Rank progeny of seed the birds have sowed,
And clover waxing in the field,
Thirst for the draught the mocking mists should

The spinner understands [yield.

What man, with all his boasted show
Of learning, has not come to know—

The subtle craft of Nature's ways,
Withheld from him of dullard gaze,
And reads the secrets of her changeful face
With instinct nurtured of a wiser race.

A Mimicry of Warfare

A noiseless little army

Camped at my door last night.

No one saw the cavaliers,

Each from his steed alight :

No sound of martial music

Proclaimed their swift advance,

Nor gleam of sword or sabre,

Nor flash of battle lance.

No rhythmic fall of hoof-beat,

No soldiers' measured tread,

The news of their arrival

Across the country spread :

And yet, when I awakened,

At coming of the dawn,

A bivouac of snowy tents

Was pitched upon my lawn,

A-glittering and glistening

With spangles of the dew,

As if a thousand jewels

Had spilled their rain-bow hue

Athwart each tiny canvas,
 Stretched taut upon the green,
Where never a pacing sentinel
 On duty could be seen.

But though to all invisible,
 The sentry was within—
A thrifty little housewife,
 Who all the night did spin,

Weaving at her ancient loom
 A fairy fabric bright,
In and out, of silken strands,
 Gossamer and light,

This mimicry of warfare—
 This witchery of tents—
The cobwebs of the spider,
 Hung from gravel walk to fence.

My Jewels

At dusk of night my beads I tell—

Each bead a sigh.

I count them over with desire.

Yet ever, as the sunset fire

Sinks to the ashes of farewell,

A pearl drops from my rosary.

My eager lips

Would call it back, the while it slips

From out my hands, and bid it stay :

But henceforth, on life's shortening way,

One glowing gem the less is mine—

A day divine.

Yesterday

Yesterday !

Thou bright, elusive one !

So near, I can touch thee with my hands :

So far, Infinitude between us stands.

Gone, with the sun,

Yesterday.

Why away ?

Does span 'twixt morn and night,

So brief a period to me,

A boundless journey seem to thee,

That thou didst poise for flight,

Yesterday ?

Blythe and gay,

When finger of the dawn

Beckoned from the eastern hills, you came ;

By no man seen before, yet still the same

Since Time and Life began,

Yesterday.

Still and gray,
And with softly slippered feet,
When dun shadows crept across the floor,
You stepped from out my cabin door,
And I saw not your retreat,
Yesterday :

Yet Today,
With twin garments like to thee,
Came early tapping at my window pane,
And I thought thou hadst returned again :
But it never more can be,
Yesterday !

Thou canst not stay,
Mystery of Being !
Swift-winged one, with Light upon thy brow !
The Illimitable doth call, thou
So sweet, so vanishing,
Yesterday !

The Wanderers

The feathered folk, of restless wing,
Journey with each Fall and Spring.
They cannot bide their time, and wait,
For what the Seasons, soon or late,
Will surely leave at every door :
But seek it on some other shore.

But furry folk, of field and wood,
Remain at home, as wise folk should.
'Tis not to their contented mind
Some distant, doubtful land to find,
When well they know, from fruitless quest,
Each bird again will seek its nest.

What Lieth Below ?

Bride robe of the snow !

What lieth below ?

Fronde of the maiden-hair, disc of the rose,
Silken-soft tendril the columbine blows,
Heart of the daffodil, wine of the larch,
Waiting the note of the trumpeter, March,
To swing to the breezes green tassel and pod,
Quickened to life in the mothering sod.

Hushed pall of the snow !

What lieth below ?

Blue of the hare-bell, in slumbering eyes,
Red of the ruby, on mute lips that lies,
Silk of the maize, in clustering curl
Caressing the brow where the lilies unfurl.
Key to all sighing, pulse of its woe,
Hush of life's heart-break, under the snow.

The Bell

Aloft, betwixt the earth and sky,
Poised in the belfry tower, am I.
And here I swing, and here I ring,
Beneath the Pulse of Everything,
And watch the passing feet below
Of priest and people, come and go.

Swing—ring—ring—swing—

Of mingled weal and woe, I sing :
The font, the bridal-wreath, the shroud,
The light illumining the cloud.

Ring—swing—swing—ring—

I have not always joy to bring :
But be it festival or fast,
To each, to all, I give at last
The still embrace of winding-sheet,
That bringeth rest to weary feet.

On, and Ever On

Heights of yesterday attained,
Lessen when those heights are gained :
Finished cup of life's desire,
Still, when quaffed, compels me higher.
Something unachieved before
Waits on that elusive shore
Whose touch is ever to my hand,
Yet just beyond what grasp has spanned.
Something farther than my thought,
Something more than hand has wrought,
Something yet beyond my will,
Beckons onward, upward still.

Immortelles

Flowers for the cradle bed :
Flowers when the maid doth wed :
Flowers for the maiden dead,

Each with blossoms on her laid,
As for festival arrayed—
Child, and bride, and quiet dead.

Snowy white, their garments are :
Purity have they for dower,
Birth, and death, and nuptial hour.

Infant drawing life's first breath,
And maid who Love's brief rapture hath,
Each unto the other saith,

Love and joy are all for me.
Joy is all of life there be.
Life is but a rhapsody.

But she who lies in quiet state,
Wrapped in shroud immaculate,
Eyelids closed where Being sate—

She alone of all the three,
Doth know where joy and rapture be,
Pulse hath felt of Ecstasy.

Deep she's quaffed the bitter cup
Unseen fingers holdeth up :
Never more with Woe she'll sup.

Joyous Bride of Death is she.
Bridal bed, though cold it be,
Giveth Immortality.

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